
COMMODORE COMPUTER USERS GROUP (QLD)

Newsletter No.7

September 1983

R.R.P. 50c.

MEETINGS

Our next meeting will be held in the QCWA building at 89 Gregory Tce., Brisbane on Tuesday, 4th October 1983, at 7.30 pm.

A VIC-20 workshop meeting will be held in the above mentioned club rooms on Sunday, 16th October 1983, from 1 to 5 pm. Bring your computers and bits and pieces along!

EDITORIAL

My sincere apologies for the abominable printing quality of the last newsletter. Hopefully this issue is an improvement.

If any of our members are involved in the printing industry we would like to hear from you at the next meeting. Any suggestions regarding type of printing, format of the newsletter etc. will be very welcome.

At our last meeting we talked about spread sheets (Greg Perry) and word processing (myself) which was quite well received. At our next meeting we hope to organize a short talk about disk-handling for beginners. The 1541 instruction book is a bit ambiguous, to say the least! If you have any problems with your disks bring them up at the next meeting.

OPEN LETTER TO COMMODORE from the editor of this newsletter

Dear Sirs,

How much longer are we, users of the Commodore 1526 printer, having to wait before you will fix the ROM bug, or whatever other bug this printer may have? It is a real nuisance having to switch this printer off and on before loading programs from disk. Several of our members have asked what will happen when their 3-months warranty runs out, if their printer is still not fixed. Over to you messrs. Commodore!!!

As a CBM-64 user I know that I speak on behalf of a great many other 64 users in our club, if we feel badly let down by your advertising. Since your March price list you have advertised software such as Easy Mail, Easy File, Easy Calc, Introduction to Basic-Part 2 etc. At the time of writing this (19th Sept. 1983) all our orders for this software have been back-ordered. Doesn't this constitute misleading advertising?

We look forward to having your comments.

EDITORIAL - cntd

The two recent workshop meetings which were held on the Sundays, 28th August and 18th September were only attended by some twenty odd members, which we feel was due to the fact that they were not very well advertised. However, those members who came, had a really good opportunity to discuss their problems and avail themselves of our copying services for public domain software. VIC members: come along in droves to the next workshop!

Disk users: the club has the opportunity to order diskettes at reduced prices. We can obtain locally Control Data disks in boxes of 10 for \$32.00 per box, and from Sydney Memorex disks for \$37.00 per box. The club has to order a minimum of 10 boxes at a time. If you are interested contact Terry Steer at 2093449 after 5 pm, or see him at the next club meeting. Remember though, that if you have to store important data on disk, it does not always pay to buy the cheapest disks available. This is however no judgement on the quality of the above mentioned brands.

A very warm welcome to Roger Haigh, who has joined the committee as minute secretary, and to Cliff Pottinger, who has taken over from Phil Lyon as librarian. Thanks Phil, for a good job well done!

Ralph De Vries

NOTES and GOSSIP

For the benefit of those readers who wish to order "COMPUTE!" or "COMPUTE!'s GAZETTE" magazines, here are some details of subscription rates etc.:

COMPUTE! : annual subscription by seaimail US \$25.00

annual subscription by airmail US \$38.00

COMPUTE!'S GAZETTE: annual subscription by seaimail US \$25.00

annual subscription by airmail US \$45.00

COMPUTE! is the magazine, which is partly devoted to Commodore computers, but COMPUTE!'S GAZETTE is wholly devoted to VIC-20 and CBM-64 computers. The first mentioned magazine however is not strictly a magazine for beginners.

Send your subscription (with a bankdraft for the appropriate amount) to either of the above mentioned magazines at the following address:

P.O.Box 5406, GREENSBORO, NC 27403, USA

Commodore have just released their model 1701 colour monitor on the Australian market (R.R.P. \$450.00). At first glance it seems to offer better definition and purer colour than the average TV set. Hopefully we may be able to see one at our next meeting.

Who, amongst our members, has successfully used lightpens? If so why not give a short talk or demo on same. The committee would love to hear from you.

At our last workshop we had an opportunity to see a Commodore plotter. We would love to see more of this one at a future meeting.

NOTES and GOSSIP (cont.)

Did you know that Commodore has shifted their manufacturing of VIC-20's and CBM-64's from Germany to Great Britain? The German factory is going to concentrate on Commodore business computers. Already some UK made 64's have been sighted locally.

Did you hear the one about a certain PET member of our group, who was nearly arrested after our last meeting? The gentleman in question, who at times is known to talk rather a lot, was one of the last to leave with his trusted PET in his arms. A cruising patrol car of the local constabulary happened to see this suspicious looking character leaving the QCWA premises, and promptly stopped this would-be burglar in his tracks! On production of the necessary identification and some verbal explanations our member was allowed to go home. Personally your editor thinks that any dentist can do with an occasional night in the cooler!

Terry Steer, also known as 'Terry I can get it for you Wholesale' or as 'Terry the Wrecker' has been pounding his fingers to the bone at his trusty 64, keying in programs for file handling, graphs, word processing etc. for the 64. He has put them on tape and disk for the benefit of our 64 users. Many thanks Terry.

S.C.C.U.G stands for Southport Commodore Computer Users' Group. This newly formed user group on the Gold Coast is now in full swing, and meets weekly (how about that!), in rooms 11 and 12 of the Southport State Primary School on Mondays at 7.00 pm. For further information phone Bill Fitzpatrick, the secretary at 075/320061.

CBM 64 NOTES

Terry Steer would like to update the 64 tape library, and therefore requests 64 users to give him a list of all 64 non-commercial programs which they might like to donate to the group. Any programs that members may have typed in out of magazines, books etc., and which are at present not represented in our tape library would be welcome, even if they don't work properly. If you have typed in programs out of books and magazines which have program - and/or printing errors in them Terry would again like to get the details from you, for purposes of correction, and if possible to get them to work.

PET NEWS

CONVERTING A 40-COLUMN PET TO AN 80-COLUMN

by RON COLLETT

My computer system consists of a 3016, upgraded to 32K., a 2031 single disk drive and an 8023P dot matrix printer. I found that I was mainly using it for wordprocessing applications in conjunction with the WordPro 3 program. The 40 column machine was a big disadvantage, especially when typing tables, because although I could set the printer line length from 1-132 characters, a single line of the table occupied several lines on the display screen, thus making it difficult to align subsequent lines.

I decided I needed 80 columns. It was then a matter of choosing the most economical way to go about it. There were a number of options open, the first being to sell the whole system and start again from scratch, but I decided against this because I would lose too much due to the initial high cost of my system compared to its low resale value. The next option was to buy an 8032 and sell my 3016. 8032's at the time were overpriced at about \$2700.00, and the value of my 3016 was about \$600.00. Once again too much to lose. A third option was to sell my 3016 and buy a new 4016 and upgrade this to 80-columns. I calculated that this would cost me about \$660.00 after change over.

The fourth and final option was to buy a Kit from the USA to modify my own machine. The cost to do this would be about \$340.00 at the then current US exchange rate. It was this lower cost plus the fact that my local Commodore dealer (in whom, because of previous dealings, I had lost confidence) had said that it was impossible to convert my machine, that finally prompted me to convert to 80-columns this way. I am pleased to say that I have not patronized that dealer and have advised other Commodore users to do likewise, since my distasteful dealings with him.

The company which offered the conversion Kit was called Execom and I saw their advertisement in "Micro" magazine. Their address is:

Execom Corporation, 1901 Polaris Ave.

RACINE WI53404 USA

They have (or had) three different Kits for the various Commodore models:

Execom 80 - Early Pets - \$275.00

Execom 80/1 - 3016, Basic2 - \$250.00

Execom 80/2 - 4016, Basic4 - \$75.00

I sent an overseas bank draft for \$260.00 to the USA to cover the cost of the 80/1 Kit + airmail charges. The Kit arrived fairly quickly and after paying about \$80.00 in Customs duty, I proceeded with the conversion. Make sure that on the customs declaration form the Kit is designated as a computer spare part - not a printed circuit board, as you may be asked to pay about 60% duty!

A very detailed instruction sheet came with the new Kit. The Kit itself comprised of a circuit board measuring about 10 cm x 12 cm with about 15 IC's mounted on it. There is also a new screen editor chip which plugs into position UD8. The new board is attached to the main board by IC sockets with extended pins which plug into IC sockets on the main board. There is also a 16-wire jumper lead from the main board to the Kit board which is again connected via 16-pin IC sockets.

CONVERTING A 40-COLUMN PET TO AN 80-COLUMN cntd.

The conversion required the removal of a number of IC's and replacing them with sockets into which the kit board will plug later on. Changes to the main board include the cutting of some traces and the addition of some wiring on the back of the main board. All wire was supplied with the kit and was cut to length. All parts were included, with the exception of solder. Also required is the interception of two IC pins, which have to be cut close to the circuit board and gently bent upwards to be able to solder a wire to them.

The conversion is done in two stages, the first being some wiring changes which are tested by plugging in a special jumpering block into one of the new IC sockets. This allows you to check your wiring up to this point. If everything is OK you continue on.

I did the job very cautiously and it took about four hours to complete. Before applying power I thoroughly checked out the changes with a digital voltmeter. A few curious things were picked up, one being that in one instruction a trace had to be cut and in a subsequent instruction it had to be replaced! I did question the Execon technician about this at a later stage, and found out that it had been included as a test to gauge the experience of the person installing the kit! Very strange.

After double checking I carefully re-assembled the computer and applied power. To my surprise I had an 80-column display, but things weren't quite right. My whole screen was showing in inverse video and I'd lost the flashing cursor.

I had access to a dual trace cathode ray oscilloscope and a logic probe, and with the help of the circuit in "The Pet Revealed" the trouble was traced to a particular chip. I replaced this with a similar one but the fault persisted. On the off chance that the first replacement chip was faulty I changed it again, but still without success.

After quite a few hours of searching the circuit and racking my brain, I noticed that the chip shown on the circuit did not have the same designation as the one in the computer. The circuit showed a 74LS74, but my chip was a 74L74. In desperation I bought a 74LS74 and found that this corrected the fault. It appeared that the original 74L74 worked fine on 40-column machines, but the 80-column machine required the faster 74LS74 chip.

A circuit of the kit is available on request, although the signing of a non-disclosure agreement is necessary. If you decide to upgrade to Basic 4, a new screen editor chip is required. This is also available.

I find that the smaller characters are quite OK for word processing work. I suggest to those who do have a 3016 or other 40-column machine and associated Commodore peripherals, that they may find this conversion interesting, and a worthwhile project, being the most economical way of going 80-columns from where they are now.

Ron Collett

Editors Note:

To our Vic-20 and CBM-64 users who are contemplating conversion to 80-columns, I would like to issue a warning.

Conversion kits to 40 or 80 column monochrome are available for the VIC, and in the USA several 80-column conversion kits for the 64 are on offer. However character definition could be a major problem, especially with a conventional TV receiver. Overseas advice is to use monitors. As the conversion units currently on offer are all black and white units, you only need a black and white monitor.

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For Commercial Advertising Rates: Phone 30 3477.

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SERVICES AVAILABLE TO MEMBERS

In addition to our commercial software and books the group has available for members' use the following public domain software:

Commodore Educational Set 1 22/3/82 (5 disks) for PET.
Commodore Educational Set 2 25/1/83 (55 disks) for PET/64.
CBM 64 Software Development Kit (3 disks).
CBM 64 Demo Disk.
Terminal Programs for PET/64. (Disk).

VIC	Games	(Commodore)
-	Demo	..
-	Education	..
-	Utilities	..
PET	Assembler Dev.	24/3/82
-	Comal.80	
-	Communications	

Additionally a substantial quantity of software of a non-commercial nature, donated by our members, is available for copying.

Members, please note: it is ILLEGAL to copy commercial software, however the Public Domain software in our library is freely available for copying.